

Parliamentary Committee Inquiries

September 2012

Parliamentary Committees are an integral part of the work of Parliament. The committees' relatively small size combined with considerable powers enable them to undertake investigations into specific matters of policy or government administration more effectively than in the formal environment of either chamber of Parliament.

A list of current Parliamentary inquiries is available at [Appendix A](#).

Background

Parliamentary committees assist the quality of policy development in Parliament by enabling the members to engage with experts and provide a forum where stakeholders can present their views on a particular issue.

Committees usually consist of members from the various parties in Parliament in proportion to their numerical strength in the House and/or Senate.

Significant powers are given to investigatory committees, such as the power to order people to attend by summons to give evidence and produce documents. In order to enforce such powers, each House is able to punish offences that obstruct the committee from carrying out its responsibilities. Not appearing before a committee when summoned or otherwise misleading a committee can be punished by reprimand, fine or imprisonment. However, these powers are rarely used as most people summoned to give evidence see it as an opportunity to give their input the policy process.

Each inquiry referred to a committee has its scope and purpose set out in the terms of reference. In most cases committees invite relevant stakeholders to lodge submissions, and in some cases stakeholders are invited to public hearings to discuss their submission and answer questions. In the end of the process the committee prepares a report setting out findings, conclusions and making recommendation for policy development. The report is then presented to the House under which the committee is serving, or to both Houses in case of a joint committee.

There are a range of different types of Parliamentary committees, the most significant of them includes:

- **Standing committees** - have a ongoing role in Parliament, as they are customarily re-established after every election.
- **Select committees** – established as the need arises, for a specific purpose. Once a select committee has presented its final report the committee is dissolved.
- **Joint committees** – draw their membership from both Houses, as well as they report to both the House of Representatives and the Senate.
- **Statutory committees** - established by Act of Parliament. All existing statutory committees are joint committees



The current Parliament, the 43rd Parliament, has seen a significant increase in inquiries into bills by House committees. This is a result of the establishment of a Selection Committee which only require one members vote to refer a bill to a standing House or joint committee. The establishment of the Selection Committee was part of the Governments agreement with the independents after the 2010 election. Less than a year after the establishment of the Selection Committee 26 bills had been referred by the committee compared to 16 between 1994 and 2010.

More information about the Selection Committee is available [here](#)

More information about Parliamentary Committees in general is available [here](#)

Appendix A: Current Parliamentary Inquiries as at Friday 21 September 2012.

Senate legislative and general purpose Committees

Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs

- Inquiry into the *Low Aromatic Fuel Bill 2012*, referred 10 May 2012
Submissions closed July 2012; Report due on 21 September 2012.
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=clac_ctte/low_aromatic_fuels/index.htm
- Inquiry into The provision of Palliative Care in Australia, referred 23 November 2011
Submissions closed 23 March 2012; Report due on 10 October 2012.
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=clac_ctte/palliative_care/index.htm
- Inquiry into Australia's domestic response to the World Health Organization's (WHO) Commission on Social Determinants of Health report "Closing the gap within a generation", referred 22 August 2012
Submissions due by 04 October 2012; Report due on 27 March 2013.
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=clac_ctte/social_determinants_of_health/index.htm
- Inquiry into *The Dental Benefits Amendment Bill 2012*, referred 20 September 2012
Submissions due by 9 October 2012; Report due on 29 October 2012
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=clac_ctte/dental_benefits/index.htm
- Inquiry into the involuntary or coerced sterilisation of people with disabilities in Australia, referred on 20 September 2012
Submissions due by TBA; Report due on 24 April 2013
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=clac_ctte/forced_sterilisation/index.htm

Senate Standing Committee on Economics

- Inquiry into the *Renewable Energy (Electricity) Amendment (Excessive Noise from Wind Farms) Bill 2012*, referred 16 August 2012
The committee is currently not accepting submissions; Report due on 31 October 2012.
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=economics_ctte/wind_farms/index.htm
- Inquiry into the post-GFC banking sector, referred 14 March 2012
Submissions closed May 2012; Report due on 31 October 2012.
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=economics_ctte/post_GFC_banking/index.htm
- Inquiry into the car fringe benefits arrangements, referred 23 June 2011
Submissions due by 12 November 2012; Report due on 27 June 2013.
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=economics_ctte/car_fringe_benefits/index.htm
- Inquiry into *The Clean Energy Amendment (International Emissions Trading and Other Measures) Bill 2012 and related bills*, referred 20 September 2012
Submissions due by 3 October 2012; Report due on 29 October 2012
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=economics_ctte/clean_energy_package_international_emissions_trading_2012/index.htm

Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

- Inquiry into *the Fair Work Amendment (Small Business-Penalty Rates Exemption) Bill 2012*, referred on 23 August 2012
Submissions due by 20 September 2012; Report due on 29 November 2012.

http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=eet_ctte/penalty_rates/index.htm

- Inquiry into the *Protecting Local Jobs (Regulating Enterprise Migration Agreements) Bill 2012 [Provisions]*, referred on 23 August 2012
Submissions closed September 2012; Report due on 29 October 2012.
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=eet_ctte/enterprise_migration_agreements/index.htm
- Inquiry into the adequacy of the allowance payment system for jobseekers and others, the appropriateness of the allowance payment system as a support into work and the impact of the changing nature of the labour market, referred on 26 June 2012
Submissions closed 03 August 2012; Report due on 29 November 2012.
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=eet_ctte/newstart_allowance/index.htm
- Inquiry into teaching and learning (maximising our investment in Australian schools), referred on 11 September 2012
Submissions due by 26 October 2012; Report due on 21 March 2013.
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=eet_ctte/teaching_learning/index.htm

Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration

- Inquiry into the Performance of the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS), referred on 23 June 2011
Submissions closed August 2011; Report due on 28 November 2012.
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=fapa_ctte/dept_parliamentary_services/index.htm

Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

- Inquiry into the *Defence Trade Controls Bill 2011*, referred on 10 November 2011
Submissions due by 31 January 2012; Report due on 15 August 2012.
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=fadt_ctte/trade_controls/index.htm
- Inquiry into the Administration, Management and Objective of Australia's Overseas Development Programs in Afghanistan in the Context of the 'Transition Decade', referred on 29 June 2012
Submissions due by 17 September 2012; Report due on 31 December 2012.
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=fadt_ctte/afghanistan/index.htm
- Inquiry into the Indian Ocean region and Australia's Foreign, Trade and Defence Policy, referred on 24 November 2011
Submissions due by 05 April 2012; Report due on 01 November 2012.
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=fadt_ctte/indianocean/index.htm

Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs

- Inquiry into the *Military Court of Australia Bill 2012* and *Military Court of Australia (Transitional Provisions and Consequential Amendments) Bill 2012*, referred on 29 June 2012
Submissions closed July 2012; Report due on 9 October 2012.
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=legcon_ctte/military_court_2012/index.htm
- Inquiry into the *Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Bill 2012*, referred on 19 June 2012
Submissions closed July 2012; Report due on 20 September 2012.
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=legcon_ctte/privacy_2012/index.htm
- Inquiry into the *Migration Amendment (Health Care for Asylum Seekers) Bill 2012*, referred on 13 2012

- Submissions due by 17 October 2012; The reporting date is 20 November 2012.
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=legcon_ctte/migration_health_care_2012/index.htm
- Inquiry into the Detention of Indonesian minors in Australia, referred on 10 May 2012
Submissions closed May 2012. Report due on 19 September 2012.
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=legcon_ctte/indonesian_minors/index.htm

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

- Inquiry into the Examination of the Foreign Investment Review Board National Interest Test, referred on 06 July 2011
Submissions closed September 2011. Report due in November 2012.
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=rrat_ctte/firb_2011/index.htm
- Inquiry into the Management of the Murray-Darling Basin, referred on the 28 October 2010
Submissions closed 5 March 2011
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=rrat_ctte/mdb/index.htm
- Inquiry into the management of the Murray Darling Basin impact of mining coal seam gas
Submissions closed June 2011; Report due on 01 November 2012.
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=rrat_ctte/mdb/index.htm
- Inquiry into the effect on Australian pineapple growers of importing fresh pineapple from Malaysia, referred 20 June 2012
Submissions closed July 2012. Report due on 10 October 2012.
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=rrat_ctte/pineapples_2012/index.htm
- Inquiry into the proposed importation of potatoes from New Zealand, referred on 12 September 2012
Submissions due by 10 October 2012. Report due on 21 November 2012.
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=rrat_ctte/potatoes_2012/index.htm
- Inquiry into the Aviation Accident Investigations (Pel-Air), referred 13 September 2012
Submissions due by 12 October 2012. Report due on 29 November 2012.
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=rrat_ctte/pel_air_2012/index.htm
- Inquiry into *The Competition and Consumer Amendment (Australian Food Labeling) Bill 2012 (No. 2)*, referred on 20 September 2012
Submissions due by TBA
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=rrat_ctte/food_labelling/index.htm
- Inquiry into the effect on Australian ginger growers of importing fresh ginger from Fiji, referred on the 19 September 2012
Submissions due by 15 October 2012; Report due on 29 November 2012
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=rrat_ctte/ginger_2012/index.htm

Senate Standing Committee of Senators' Interests

- Inquiry into draft code of conduct for Senators, referred on 2 March 2011
Report due on 27 November 2012.
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=interests_ctte/inquiries/code_conduct/index.htm

Joint Committees administered by the Senate

Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity

- Integrity of overseas Commonwealth law enforcement operations, referred on 06 December 2011
Submissions closed February 2012.
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=aclei_ctte/integrity_international_operations/index.htm

Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement

- Inquiry into the gathering and use of criminal intelligence, referred on 30 May 2012
Submissions closed August 2012
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=le_ctte/criminal_intelligence/index.htm

Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services

- Inquiry into Family Business in Australia, referred on 16 August 2012
Submissions due by 31 October 2012. Report due on 27 February 2013
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=corporations_ctte/fam_bus/index.htm
- Inquiry into *The Corporations Legislation Amendment (Derivative Transactions) Bill 2012*, referred on 13 September 2012
Submissions due by 3 October 2012; Report due on 11 October 2012
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=corporations_ctte/derivatives/index.htm
- Inquiry into *The Personal liability for Corporate Fault Reform Bill 2012*, referred on 20 September 2012
Submissions due by TBA ; Report due on 29 October 2012
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=corporations_ctte/liability/index.htm
- Inquiry into *The Superannuation Legislation Amendment (Further MySuper and Transparency Measures) Bill 2012*, referred on 20 September 2012
Submissions due by TBA;
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=corporations_ctte/MySuper_transparency/index.htm

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Treaties

- Inquiry into treaties tabled 18 September 2012
Submissions due by 19 October 2012
http://www.aph.gov.au/parliamentary_business/committees/house_of_representatives_committees?url=jsct/18september2012/index.htm
- Inquiry into treaties tabled 11 September 2012
Submission due by 12 October 2012
http://www.aph.gov.au/parliamentary_business/committees/house_of_representatives_committees?url=jsct/11september2012/index.htm

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works

- Inquiry into the upgrade of on-base housing for Defence at Larrakeyah Barracks, Darwin, Northern Territory, referred on 19 September 2012
Submissions due by 26 October 2012
http://www.aph.gov.au/parliamentary_business/committees/house_of_representatives_committees?url=pwc/dhalarrakeyah/index.htm

- Inquiry into the upgrade of housing for Defence at RAAF Base Tindal, Northern Territory, referred on 19 September 2012
Submissions due by 26 October 2012
http://www.aph.gov.au/parliamentary_business/committees/house_of_representatives_committees?url=awc/dhatindal/index.htm

Senate Select Committees

Select Committee on Electricity Prices

- Inquiry into electricity prices, referred to 23 August 2012
Submissions due by 14 September 2012. Report due on 01 November 2012.
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=electricityprices_ctte/electricityprices/index.htm

Joint Select Committees administered by the Senate

Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform

- Inquiry into the Productivity Commission report on gambling, referred 30 September 2010
http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=gamblingreform_ctte/index.htm

House Standing Committees

Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

- Inquiry into language learning in Indigenous communities
http://aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=atsia/languages/info.htm
- Inquiry into the contribution of sport to Indigenous wellbeing and mentoring, referred 19 September 2012
Submissions due by 26 October
http://www.aph.gov.au/parliamentary_business/committees/house_of_representatives_committees?url=atsia/sport/index.htm

House Standing Committee on Agriculture, Resources, Fisheries and Forestry

- Inquiry into the Role of Science for Fisheries and Aquaculture
Referred on 21 March 2012
http://aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=arff/fisheries/index.htm

Standing Committee on Climate Change, Environment and the Arts

- Inquiry into Australia's biodiversity in a changing climate, referred on 2 June 2011
Submissions closed July 2011
http://aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=ccea/ccbio/index.htm

Standing Committee on Economics

- Review of the Reserve Bank Annual Report 2011 (Second Report)
http://aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=economics/rba2011_02/index.htm

Standing Committee on Education and Employment

- Inquiry into workplace bullying, referred on 31 May 2012
Submissions due by 21 September 2012.
http://aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=ee/bullying/index.htm
- Roundtable on international education, referred on 15 March 2012
http://aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=ee/internationalroundtable/tor.htm
- Inquiry into Higher Education Support Amendment (Maximum Payment Amounts and Other Measures) Bill 2012, referred on 13 September 2012
Submissions closed on 19 September 2012
http://www.aph.gov.au/parliamentary_business/committees/house_of_representatives_committees?url=ee/higheredsupport/index.htm

Standing Committee on Health and Ageing

- Inquiry into Dementia: Early diagnosis and Intervention, referred on 20 March 2012
Submissions closed May 2012.
http://aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=haa/dementia/index.htm

Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications

- Inquiry into IT Pricing, referred on 24 May 2012
Submissions closed July 2012
http://aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=ic/itpricing/index.htm
- Inquiry into Smart Infrastructure
http://aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=ic/smartinfrastructure/index.htm

Standing Committee on Regional Australia

- Inquiry into the use of 'fly-in, fly-out' (FIFO) workforce practices in regional Australia, referred on 23 August 2011
http://aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=ra/fifodido/index.htm

Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs

- Inquiry into Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, referred on 8 November 2011
Submissions closed March 2012
http://aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=spla/fasd/index.htm
- Inquiry into *Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Further 2012 Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2012*, referred on 13 September
http://aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=spla/bill%20social%20security/index.htm
- Inquiry into the *Do Not Knock Register Bill 2012*, referred on 24 May 2012
http://aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=spla/bill%20do%20not%20knock/index.htm
- Inquiry into the *Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Bill 2012*, referred on 24 May 2012
Submissions closed 3 August 2012; Report due by 21 September 2012
http://aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=spla/bill%20privacy/index.htm
- Inquiry into the *Wild Rivers (Environmental Management) Bill 2011*
http://aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=spla/bill%20wildrivers/index.htm

- Inquiry into Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Further 2012 Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2012, referred on 13 September 2012
http://www.aph.gov.au/parliamentary_business/committees/house_of_representatives_committees?url=spla/bill%20social%20security/index.htm

Joint Select Committees administered by the House

Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety

- Inquiry into Cybersafety for Senior Australians, referred on 23 November 2011
http://aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=jsc/index.htm

Joint Committees administered by the House

Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters

- Inquiry into the AEC analysis of the FWA report on the HSU, referred on 16 May 2012
Submissions closed 21 June 2012
http://aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=em/fundingdisclosure/index.htm

Parliamentary joint Committee on Intelligence and Security

- Inquiry into potential reforms of National Security Legislation
Submissions closed 20 August 2012
http://aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=pjcis/nsi2012/index.htm
- Review of the re-listing of Al Shabaab, Hamas' Iss al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), Lashkar-e-Tayyiba and Palestinian Islamic Jihad as terrorist organisations
Submissions closed 3 September 2012
http://aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=pjcis/five_terrorist/index.htm
- Review of Administration and Expenditure No. 11 (2011 – 2012) – Australian Intelligence Agencies
Submissions due by 22 November 2012
http://aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=pjcis/adminexp11/index.htm

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

- Inquiry into the Care of ADF Personnel Wounded and Injured on Operations, referred on 15 June 2012
Submissions closed August 2012
http://aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=jfadt/wounded_injured/index.htm

Joint Committee on the National Broadband Network

- Inquiry into the rollout of the NBN project until the NBN is operational
http://aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=jcnbn/index.htm